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PLAYLEADERSHIP

*A reference manual
for the leader
of
children's play programs*



Ontario Ministry
of Culture and
Recreation

Sports and
Fitness
Division

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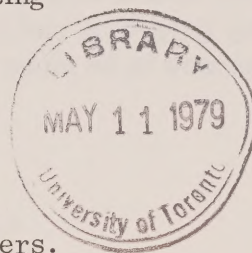


PLAY LEADERSHIP

What's it all about?

Each year thousands of young adults are hired in a volunteer or paid capacity, to work with children as play leaders. The play sites and program formats vary - playgrounds, day camps, community centres, pre-school and tot lots. The job titles vary - playground supervisor, day camp leader, camp counsellor, program director, activities co-ordinator - but the purposes are essentially the same:

- to provide a safe place for children to play
- to help the child learn new social, creative and physical skills, and to improve existing ones
- to help the child develop citizenship and leadership abilities and interests
- to help the child develop a positive self-concept and a healthy attitude toward others.



With these types of objectives, it is obvious that the playleader's job is a very important and often difficult one. Through their involvement they will have an opportunity to play an important role in the lives of the children they are working with, and provide an important community service. Playleaders are, necessarily, very special people who are interested in helping children develop their potential, who are viewed by their communities as leaders, and who are interested in developing themselves through their work experience.

The playleader must have a wide variety of knowledge, skills and personal attributes in order to do his or her job well, including:

- an understanding of children and how they develop
- an understanding of play and the importance it has in the child's life
- an understanding of leadership styles and skill in using a variety of techniques


- knowledge of a variety of recreation activities and skill in several areas
- an ability to plan and present a balanced play program designed to meet the needs and interests of children at several age, ability and interest levels
- a personality, character and appearance that enables him or her to get along well with children, parents, peers, supervisors and community figures.

Playleadership is a difficult but extremely important job. Children need opportunities to play in safe environments. They need to be exposed to a variety of activities and media. And they need to be involved with responsive, responsible and capable leaders.

The purpose of this manual is to help those responsible for planning and administering play programs and to help playleaders who are working with children in these programs to be more effective leaders of children's play.

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SECTION I

Play

Play is the expression of human freedom, because it is:

*"a spontaneous, natural, creative, desired
research activity carried out for its own
sake"*
- Scarfe

*"any activity engaged in for the enjoyment
it gives, without any consideration for
the end result"*
- Samways

*"doing what you want to do, when you want
to do it"*
- Dattner

*"the most complete of all the educational
processes for it influences the intellect,
the emotion and the body of the child"*
- Scarfe

*"the way the child learns what none can
teach him. It is the way he explores
and orients himself to the actual world
of space and time, of things, animals,
structures and people.
....Play is the child's work."*
- Frank

These comments, by some of the leading authorities in the area of play, confirm that play is a most important aspect of life. The essential qualities of play are that it is:

Voluntary

- if a child is forced into, or
coerced into, an activity,
he or she is not at play.

Research-oriented

- a child at play is finding out about the world around, testing himself or herself in new situations, taking risks in order to find out what their limits are, and to expand them.

Educational

- through play, the child develops social skills, physical and mental abilities, attitudes towards people and things, and most importantly, an understanding of his or her self.

Enjoyable

- the only purpose the player has is gaining personal enjoyment from the play activity.

- Think about what happens on playgrounds and in organized play programs that you are familiar with. Is it really play?
- When are you at play, and how do you feel when you are at play?

TYPES OF PLAY

By Categories

It is easier to understand play if we divide it into certain categories. CAUTION: the divisions are not clear and separate, as most good play activities will combine elements from many or all of these categories.

Creative play - the manipulation and combining of separate materials to make a finished object or to make something different from the materials. Creative play uses the imagination and limited muscular ability (fine motor skills). The completed object may have no significance for others, but can be very clear and specific to the child.

Creative play - (cont'd)

While creating, the child has an opportunity to find out about textures, weights, colors, balance - all of the basic facts of living in a particular environment. Towers built by a three-year-old usually consist of several blocks placed precariously on top of each other, with more force than planning. Eight-year-olds can build houses of playing cards. Somewhere along the line a great deal of mental and physical skill has been developed.

Imaginative play - very similar to creative play, except there is not necessarily a tangible result. An object or a utensil sets the mind to a whole series of situations and escapades. Dressing up, playing house, lion hunts, cops and robbers, daydreaming are all examples of imaginative play. The object or utensil itself might be imaginary.

Through this type of play, children think themselves into situations, work out reactions, and attempt to come to terms - their own terms - with people and events. It is possible, however, for a person to develop a whole world of fantasy around himself or herself - to lose sight of what is real and what is not. While imaginative play is an exciting and important form of play in no way restricted to children the normal child will learn to differentiate between fact and fiction and channel his or her imagination into suitable activities.

Adventure play - the overcoming of both physical and mental obstacles and the development of new skills through exercising muscles with as much co-ordination and strength as already exists. If danger is present, the adventure play experience is heightened. Examples of adventure play would include tree climbing, obstacle courses, hill sliding.

We all gain physically and mentally from overcoming our environment, reaching heights we have never risked before, testing and extending our abilities. A child's delight in completing an obstacle course is mirrored in his or her increasing self-confidence. It is important that the dangers not be too great, and that the obstacles not be overly difficult. The first could be tragic, the second could lead to discouragement and decreased self-confidence.

Destructive play - not necessarily a malicious or vandalistic act. Until objects have been reduced to their component parts children cannot understand what they are. If the components were not meant to come apart then that is just too bad. Great satisfaction is gained by positively changing things into something else, perhaps by scribbling over it or taking a piece off of it. These types of acts can often be interpreted as the beginning of the creative process, rather than the destruction of an object.

TYPES OF PLAY

in relation to others

There are a number of ways in which children play in relation to other children, and each provides opportunities for certain types of emotional experiences and the development of social, intellectual and/or physical skills.

Solitary play - the child plays alone. The play may be entirely within the mind of the person and may or may not involve the use of an object or utensil. Reading, fantasies, hobbies, fishing or hiking by oneself are all examples of solitary play.

Solitary play helps in the development of emotional independence and self-understanding. The child is able to concentrate more fully on the object of play, be that an idea, a craft or a new toy. The child is also free from the inhibitions imposed by being with others and able to experiment with different behaviors. Try on new clothes, so to speak, to see how they fit.

While solitary play is important, it can also be an escape for persons not willing or not able to develop relations with others. We are social animals, and the child or adult who repeatedly uses solitary play as a retreat is not normal.

Parallel play - the children play beside each other, but not with each other. All of the children may be playing with similar or entirely different objects, or attention might be focused by all the children on one object such as a film, without any real interaction.

Through parallel play the child is exposed to the way in which other children play, and may be motivated to try new things that the others are doing. If children nearby are playing with similar materials (e.g. craft materials) there is an opportunity to compare one's own skills and methods of doing things, and to try new ways. There is also an opportunity to compare how other children behave in certain situations and to try new behavior if one wishes to.

Individual competitive play - where a child plays with another child or other children, and the intent is to demonstrate greater ability than or superiority over his or her playmate(s). Two children might compete in a game of checkers or chess. Many children may compete in a race, or a game of King of the Castle. The intensity of the competition might be low or high, depending on the situation.

Individual competitive play (cont'd)

Through competition of this sort there are opportunities to develop new skills, improve old ones, and improve present abilities, such as endurance. There is also an opportunity to test oneself against peers, to understand one's strengths and weaknesses better, to learn the social skills that accompany winning and losing.

Individual co-operative play - where a child plays with another child or other children and the intent is to reach mutual, personal goals. The most common feature of this type of play is the sharing of resources. For instance, in a craft group several children may be making very different projects, but there is a need for them to share items such as scissors and glue.

In this type of play there is a need for effective verbal and/or non-verbal communications, and a willingness to give and to receive. In addition to the value of the particular activity, there is an opportunity to develop skills of negotiation, compromise and conflict settlement.

Group co-operative play - where two or more people join together to reach a goal that is shared by all members of the group. Examples would include a couple going for a hike in the countryside, acting in a play, working on a group craft project.

As in individual co-operative play, there is a need for effective communication skills. There is also a need to trust or have faith in other members of the group. One learns that everyone's contribution is important in achieving a group goal. However, everyone's contribution might be very different. Much is learned through this type of play about group decision-making and problem-solving. One has an opportunity to develop leadership skills and human relations skills.

Inter-group competitive play - where two or more children join together to play with another group of two or more children, and the intent is to demonstrate greater ability or superiority of one group over the other. The individual groups may be very cohesive and work co-operatively as a unit (for instance, organized team sports). Or they might be quite incohesive, as in a pick up team sport. A drama festival or a snow sculpturing contest would be other examples.

The type of play, like individual competitive play, provides opportunities for skill and attitude development. It is important to be accepted as a part of a team, to co-ordinate your efforts and abilities with those of others, and to test those combined abilities against a reasonable

Inter-group competitive play (cont'd)

challenge. The peer pressure and recognition provides tremendous motivation to develop skills which will be helpful to the team.

Inter-group co-operative play - where two or more groups join together to reach a mutual goal and in fact form one new group. There is an absence of emphasis on competition, and an emphasis on co-operation through co-ordination, compromise and consensus. While competition might exist, it is low level. Examples of this type of play would include a drama festival without adjudication and awards, but perhaps with evaluation and discussion of each presentation. A house league which keeps no scores or team standings. A penny carnival presented by several playgrounds coming together.

The values of this type of play are the same as for group co-operative play, but may be more sophisticated. Because large numbers are often involved, a layer of committees or representative planning is added, which enlarges the type of experience the participant may have.

COMPETITION AND CO-OPERATION

There are real differences between co-operative and competitive forms of play. Competitive play involves an individual or a group attempting to achieve mastery over another individual or group - a win/lose situation. Co-operative play involves an individual or a group joining with another individual or group to meet a mutual goal - a win/win situation.

One form of play is not better than the other. Each form provides a different type of experience. Each has value for the participant, but each also has its limitations. It is important that playleaders understand the value of competition and co-operation, and include both in their program.

In order to do this the leader must be aware of the developmental needs of children and the effect that his or her leadership style will have on determining the program. These will be dealt with in later sections of this manual.

WHY ORGANIZE PLAY?

As we have seen, play is a perfectly natural activity for children. If there were no playgrounds, day camps, community centres, nursery schools etc. children would still spend most of their time at play. So why provide these things? Why not just let it happen?

Because play is so important to the healthy development of the child, it is essential that each child have an opportunity to participate in play activities that will help in that development. More importantly, most children enjoy organized play experiences. With few exceptions, children attend playgrounds, day camps etc. because they have fun there. If the organized play experience is not fun, children will simply stop coming. Only the most insensitive of parents would force their child to attend a program they did not enjoy.

Through organizing play we can:

- ensure that every child has a safe place to play
- provide a wider variety of locations, activities, and playmates for the child
- provide encouragement, recognition and guidance that a child might need but does not get in other settings
- stimulate new interests through materials and equipment which would not normally be available to the child
- provide a change of pace from the usual routine.

BUT MOST IMPORTANT

- we can provide YOU – the playleader.

Children

AGES AND STAGES

As we all know, children move through several stages of physical, social, emotional and intellectual development on their way from infancy to adulthood. The stages are usually associated with the age of a child or a series of developmental tasks. This type of categorization can only be done in a very general way, because each child is a unique individual and therefore develops in a way that is different from every other child.

The factors that affect the way in which a child develops are many and complex, including:

- individual genetic inheritance
- very early relationship with parents, guardians and siblings
- the amount and variety of exposure to materials, ideas and other people such as playmates, relatives, teachers and playleaders
- the nature and quality of exposure to materials, ideas and other people
- limits imposed on development in certain ways, such as illness, physical or mental disabilities, economic situation of family.

In general terms only, then, we can look at stages of development that children go through.

Infancy - roughly 0 to 12 months old

The infant is characterized primarily by his or her total dependency on others, limited ability to express himself or herself verbally, and limited ability to move from one place to another. These months are among the most important in a child's development, in that foundations for future growth and development are being laid.

Through the first year, the child has begun to determine if the world is a safe and dependable place, or a painful and threatening one. Most children find the world to be a wonderful place. Those who suffer abuse from others, those who are constantly ill or in pain, and those who do not receive the love and nourishment we all need, must start their lives from an entirely different point of view.

Toddlers - roughly 1 year to three years old

The toddler is characterized primarily by his or her ability to walk and express himself or herself to some extent verbally. Towards the end of toddlerhood period, these skills are well developed.

The toddler is often seen as a bundle of contradictions. They want to do things entirely on their own one minute, and then rely totally on a parent or older sibling the next. They will be tender and gentle, then strike out at anyone and anything. They will sit quietly playing with a toy, then without warning begin to cry or scream. The changes in temperament occur with reason.

Children at this stage are actively striving for independence, yet realize that they are dependent for so many things on others. In working through their feelings, which are extremely intense, they move from rebellion to submission and back again until they learn what they can do on their own, or with limited assistance. While the toddler recognizes other people, he or she often treats them as things, an obstacle to be shoved, a climbing apparatus, or something to be manipulated so he or she may get what is wanted.

The toddler usually plays alone or parallel to other children with periods of interaction. Much of the interactive play is competitive. The object is to secure a valued toy, or the attention of a parent or play-leader. Often it is also co-operative, as they experiment with sharing, teaching one another and talking back and forth.

The toddler needs to be able to test himself or herself and to have freedom to try things on his or her own. They need to be able to assert their independence, yet be protected - both physically and psychologically. They must have a variety of things to do, but should not be forced into situations that are too much for them. Life should be kept

Toddlers (cont'd)

relatively simple for them. For instance, crowds, noise and confusion should be the exception rather than the rule. Directions should be given in short clear wording, rather than in long speeches of eight or nine words, and should be given at eye level if possible.

Play Suggestions: Toddlers need a play area that allows them room to try out new motor skills. That area should be well defined by fences or hedges. It should be safe from pointed or sharp edges, and things that can trap the child. Sand, water, dirt, leaves and snow are all delightful mediums for creative and imaginative play. Climbing equipment, boxes, hills and small ledges will stimulate adventure play. Clay, crayons, pencils, simple puzzles and large movable blocks will be well used, as will action toys (trucks, trains, cars etc.) and picture books. Domestic play with dolls and household utensils is very important.

Preschoolers - roughly 3 years to 5 years old

The preschooler is developing in many different directions at once. There is a greater development of individual differences. The preschooler begins to integrate many of his or her skills into complex activity, such as war games, free form dancing, playing house.

Social skills are being developed, as evidenced in a preference for co-operative play on an individual and small group basis. The preschooler makes friends and enjoys being in the company of other children. They are also often content to play for long periods of time by themselves, with a special toy or object. They try to please others and conform to do so. Things and people begin to take on special meaning. They begin to discriminate preferred playmates and play materials.

Fear of real things such as animals, darkness, sounds, is characteristic at the early part of this stage. The child learns to differentiate between real and imagined fears by the time he or she is five or six. These fears are often a result of understanding better the hazards that do exist in life. At the same time his or her active mind and body are pushing into hazardous situations. The child is starting to separate himself or herself from the immediate environment, to move into the neighborhood, and through ideas, into space and the unknown.

The world is full of wonders to the preschooler - and magic is expected. The child who is able to spot minute differences in aircraft, for example, can readily accept the story of a jolly fat man and his bundle of toys drawn through the sky by flying reindeer. Whatever they want to be, they can be, through their imagination. The world

Preschoolers (cont'd)

is just beginning to open up for them, as they begin to learn rapidly by talking with others, through television and books.

Play Suggestions: Many of the same materials that pleased the toddler please the preschooler. However, these materials are now often used to create something very specific. Sand might be used to create a whole town complete with shops and roads. The creation, once completed, will be quickly broken down and something new created from the materials. Because it is the process of creation that is important, not the end products.

The small hills and boxes can be larger now because of the toddler's increased size and physical ability. They will now become, through the imagination, ships, forts and play houses, plus a thousand other things.

Crayons, paints and pencils are now used to make simple figures and to visualize definite ideas. Cutting and pasting are added to the artistic and creative repertoire. Old clothes lead to dressing up and the dramatizing of a variety of roles. Books become very important as the child begins to understand the stories and the medium of print. Puzzles, nonsense rhymes and simple games such as "Scissors-Paper-Stones" are enjoyed.

Middle childhood - roughly six through nine years old

The chief characteristic of this age is the lessening of dependency on the family and the turning to the peer group for status and recognition. As the child's ability to do things on his or her own increases, they experience greater freedom of choice in activities, freedom to explore their environment and greater involvement in a variety of social groups.

School has become a major factor in their lives. With school comes a tremendous explosion of knowledge, skills and social contacts. The children become exposed to adults other than parents, who exercise very real control over them. They must learn to modify their behavior in order to get along in a large group of children in a classroom. How they respond to these new authority figures and situations will have a significant effect on their self-image, because of the influence this has on success in school activities.

Children in this age group enjoy being with a large number of children, but do not necessarily identify with a group purpose or shared objectives. The bond that brings children of this stage together is friendship, not a common goal or team feeling. While they are often competitive in their play and work, it is usually on an individual basis, as they test

Middle childhood (cont'd)

their abilities with those around them. The concepts of winner/loser and good/bad begin to be very real for the child as he or she becomes more able to interpret the verbal and nonverbal messages being received from adults and peers.

Play Suggestions: In spite of the examples of minor sport leagues, competitive team sports are not appropriate activities for this age group, except where the organization and competition are low key. Physical activities are important. Any program for this age group will have to have a lot of opportunities for low organized games, running, sliding and climbing. If an organized game is to be played, the rules should be few, well understood and closely followed. The players themselves should be encouraged to determine the rules they will play by. Team sports at the younger end of the age group should not be emphasized. However they do become important at age 8 and 9.

The wide world of nature is opening up for this child. They are extremely interested in learning about flora and fauna. Hikes, camping, nature lore, and nature crafts are of keen interest. Also of interest - skits and sing-songs, painting (finger, foot, brush, splatter) weaving, clay and plasticine modelling, carving and a host of creative mediums.

Children of this age group will experiment with just about any creative media. It is important to expose them to as much as possible. The finished product becomes important as it provides a vehicle for gaining recognition and approval. This is not the case with younger children.

Late childhood - roughly 10 through 12 years of age

This period can most appropriately be described as the gang age. There is a strong differentiation of sexes and the formation of close small group relationships. The approval of peer groups becomes more important than the approval of teachers and parents. Children of this age may become very hostile towards adult interference.

Children of this age group are very mobile. They can bike for miles, or take a bus downtown or to another city. They are starting to understand and form opinions about the world around them. The child at this age has few fears, is self-motivated and to a large degree self-sufficient. They are able to and usually prepared to take greater responsibility for the things they do.

There is absolutely no way he or she is going to attend a play program unless it is seen by his or her peers as the thing to do. Their attendance is likely to be more sporadic, and more demanding. If what they

find is not what they are looking for, they'll just leave.

Play Suggestions: By this age the child has likely been exposed to a variety of activities, and developed a preference for certain sports and/or creative activities. There is less willingness to try new activities unless they are of a special nature (e.g. horseback riding, canoeing) or unless they are presented in an exciting manner and have peer group approval.

It becomes extremely important to involve the children in decisions about their play program – determining the activities and rules. However, the effective playleader will encourage them not to limit themselves to familiar activities. For instance, boys of this age group will play floor hockey at the drop of a hat. Given the choice they would probably decide to play floor hockey every day for the entire summer. The effective playleader will suggest and encourage new activities.

Club and team activities are both appropriate. Cubs and Brownies, house leagues, special interest clubs or classes are of interest at the younger end of the age group. Minor sports, gang or friendship groups, and scouting or guiding are popular at the older end. Exercises and drills that enhance athletic skills are also of interest.

Any outdoor activity which has a quality of adventure or risk to it – canoeing, riding, exploring, camping – are also sure winners.

Adolescence – roughly 12 to 15 years of age

Adolescence is defined as the age between childhood and adulthood. It is a period of rapid physical growth and personality change. It is characterized by the various aspects of puberty. There is a strong interest developing in the opposite sex, accompanied by teasing, shyness and awkwardness.

Adolescents do not normally take part in a play program unless it is in a voluntary leadership capacity, or unless there is a program designed specifically for them. Often, however, several will hang around the playground or centre. A creative playleader will be able to help them get involved in something that interests them.

If a program is to be offered this age group, it should not be restricted to one site. The playground could be used as a home base from which the participants could visit a variety of local and more remote sites such as bowling alleys, swimming holes, campgrounds. They must take a major responsibility for planning and operating their program, with assistance and encouragement from the playleader.

Adolescence (cont'd)

Competition is very keen with this age group, and team sports are essential components. There is interest in competing with teams from other playgrounds or centres. Creative activities seem to begin to flourish again, particularly fad crafts such as macrame, candle making and tie-dying. Drama, photography, film-making, and creative writing (prose & poetry) are popular with many in this age group as well.

Probably the most effective way for a playleader to respond to this age group is to think back a few years. What kinds of things excited you and your friends? What would you like to see happen? How would you like it to happen if you were 13 or 14 years old again?

The atypical child

Play programs should not, and do not generally, restrict participation to normal, healthy, typical children. In every community there are children who have special problems and special needs – the perceptual handicapped, diabetics, blind, amputees, mentally retarded, deaf, and the list goes on. Statistics indicate that in every group of 100 children, 25 to 30 have major intellectual, physical or emotional problems.

Play programs should be open to any child who wants to take advantage of that opportunity. Much is to be gained by both the typical and atypical child, through involvement together. If atypical children are ever to function in their community, then each one needs to be exposed to the realities of daily living. We who presume to be normal must also be exposed to them and their needs.

To be sure, these special children present some difficulties to the playleader, particularly if he or she has had no experience with these disabilities. The following points should help

- try to talk to the parents to find out more about the individual's situation, and what you are able to do
- trust the other children to be supportive and helpful, and let nature take its course, unless you're sure you have to intervene
- be aware that what might be a small success for the typical child might be a major success for the atypical child and treat it accordingly
- FOCUS ON THE ABILITY, NOT THE DISABILITY.

Children's needs

Needs are different from interests or wants, and are required for the individual to develop in a healthy manner. There are several needs that are common to children at all ages or stages of development. Certain responses are required from playleaders and playmates if these needs are to be met.

Emotional Needs

Affection	- a feeling of being loved
Belonging	- a feeling of being wanted by others, feeling secure
Independence	- a feeling of personal power, of having some control over one's life
Achievement	- a feeling of satisfaction from making things, succeeding at something or completing something well
Social approval	- a feeling that others approve of your conduct and efforts
Self esteem	- a feeling of personal worth
Intellectual needs	- to develop an ability to think clearly, solve problems and understand concepts
Character and social needs	- to develop an ability to live with others in a co-operative and socially-approved way; good citizenship skills and attitudes
Physical needs	- to develop a healthy body and good health habits

In order to help the child meet these needs, the playleader and the child's playmates have to provide an atmosphere and an attitude which accepts the child as he or she is. These should give recognition for efforts made and tasks accomplished, and provide a non-judgmental pattern of feedback to the child on how his or her behavior is perceived by others.

The meeting of these needs is obviously not the sole responsibility of the playleader and playmates. Teachers, parents, brothers and sisters, classmates, etc. are all involved in this process. The playleader and playmates are, however, part of the process and the playleader should see the meeting of these needs as an important part of the job.

Leadership

A DEFINITION

Although leadership is seen in a variety of ways, social scientists generally agree that it should be defined as any action which enables an individual or a group of individuals to move towards the accomplishment of his/her or their objective(s).

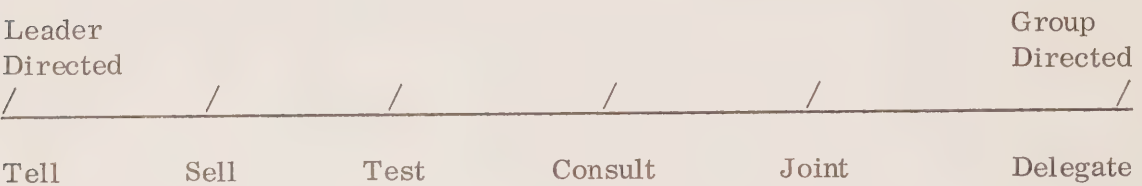
Leadership then is:

any action	- it is something that is done by someone. It may be a minor or major occurrence. It is not a position such as president or chairman.
which enables	- it helps, assists, facilitates, aids
an individual or a group of individuals	- involves people, for instance children on a playground
to move towards the accomplishment	- does not imply completion of or accomplishment, only movement towards. This implies that several leadership acts are required to see something accomplished
of his/her or their objective(s)	- if it is leadership, the action must help move towards the followers' objectives, not objectives imposed from other sources, and not the objectives of the leader.

The role of the playleader, then, is to take appropriate action to enable the children who are part of the program to move towards the meeting of their objectives. The children will undoubtedly identify FUN as their main objective. However, experience tells us that the other objectives outlined on page 20 are not only those of the hiring authority or parents, but are accepted by the children as well.

Leadership Styles

Leadership style refers to the way in which the appointed leader initiates action towards the objective(s). Style may be thought of as different points on a continuum ranging from totally leader-directed to totally group-directed.



The following statements show how the different styles can be used to initiate an activity - a softball game.

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Tell | "O.K., it's 10:30 and it's time for softball. George, get the bat and ball. Line up so I can pick the teams." |
| Sell | "Hey, it's 10:30 and I think we should play softball now. We haven't played it for a while and it's such a great game. You'll have a lot of fun." |
| Test | "O.K., it's 10:30. Why don't we play softball now. If no one has a better idea, I think that's what we should do. O.K.?" |
| Consult | "O.K., it's 10:30. What do you want to do for the rest of the morning? We could play softball, or something else. I'd like to get your suggestions, before I decide." |
| Join | "O.K., it's 10:30. Let's decide what we're going to do next. We probably all have some good ideas and if we talk them over we can come up with something that will please everyone. I want you to know that it's up to all of us to decide, and I'll have no more say than any one of you." |
| Delegate | "O.K. it's 10:30. Whatever you want to do, go to it - as long as it's legal. The softball equipment is over there craft materials are in the box and the games are on the table." |

As you read these statements you probably agreed with some approaches and disagreed with others, depending on how you saw the situation. That is the essence of leadership style. There are a variety of styles available to the leader. His or her job is to interpret the situation and select the style which seems most appropriate to the situation.

For instance, a Tell style might not very often be appropriate for getting a ball game going, but if the children were having a hard time getting started at anything, if you could sense they were expecting some direct action on your part, then it might be appropriate. Like wise, if a child is playing with a potentially dangerous item, such as a pointed stick, you are not going to JOIN with him to discuss whether or not to stop playing with the stick - you are going to TELL him, in a positive and direct manner - that the stick goes.

As a playleader you should be frequently considering the style you use in different situations and asking yourself if the styles used were appropriate. If you find yourself using one end of the continuum, or the middle, most of the time, then you have a patterned leadership style. You tend to be:

- Autocratic - if you usually tell, sell or test
- Democratic - if you usually test, consult or join
- Laissez-faire - if you usually delegate

In most situations, playleaders are expected to use a democratic style. However they should not be limited to one particular type of style. The important thing is that the playleader be aware of the situation, and select a style based on that awareness.

Leadership and Supervision

Over the years the terms Playground Leader and Playground Supervisor have been used interchangeably. In fact, they are two different things, both by definition and by implication.

Leadership, by definition, is any action which enables an individual or a group to move towards the meeting of their objective(s). Supervision, on the other hand, is the overseeing, directing and controlling of an individual or group in order to ensure that the objectives of the organization or hiring authority are reached. The obvious implication is that leadership is concerned with the objectives of those being led, while supervision is concerned with the objectives of the sponsoring organization.

In the operation of play programs the objectives, for the most part, will be shared. The objectives most commonly identified by both children and organizations, although in different terms, are:

- to have fun
- to learn new social, creative and physical skills
- to develop friendships
- to have a safe place to play
- to be able to try new things
- to have a change of pace

While the objectives are similar, the means of meeting these objectives may be very different, as may the relative importance of the objectives.

Because leadership is concerned with the objectives of the followers, the leader helps them move towards the objectives that are most important to the follower, in ways that are most appropriate to the follower.

Because supervision is concerned with the objectives of the organization, the supervisor helps the followers move towards the objectives that are most important to the organization, in ways that are most appropriate to the organization.

Planning the program

The program for a playground includes everything the children do from the time they step on the play area until they leave for home, whether their play is

individual or with others,
organized or free,
active or passive.

Your program schedules the opportunities for play.

Why plan?

- to give yourself, as a leader, confidence and assurance
- to make the best use of your talents
- to make the most effective use of space, equipment and time
- to provide for all age groups
- to include a variety of activities to meet a variety of interests
- to achieve a balance of the different types of activities
- to prevent repetition
- to create enthusiasm and curiosity
- to know what special equipment you need
- to make better use of your equipment
- to help prevent accidents
- to set and achieve goals or objectives
- to include the children in the decisions as to what will be done.

Plan your program with the children in mind and they will come back again and again. Daily attendance is one indication of the interest children have in your program. Dropping attendance as the season draws to a close is not likely to be a problem if you have planned carefully and well.

If you do not plan effectively your program will be unbalanced, confused and purposeless – regardless of your skills, knowledge and personality.

Factors involved in planning

Physical features of the playground

- the area, shape and type of surface provided
- the type and location of fixed equipment and playing areas
- the amount of expendable equipment

The participants -

- the number of children
- the age-groupings involved
- the prevailing interests
- willingness on the part of parents to participate

The "time" factor -

- the length of the program day and season
- seasonal interests in specific activities

Local factors -

- holiday periods of local industries
- church vacation bible schools
- prevailing weather conditions

The requirements of the recreation authority -

- general rules laid down by the authority
- the number and training of supervisors on the playground
- the number of volunteers used
- the units of planning used - daily, weekly, seasonal
- attitudes towards trips off the playground

General factors -

- your ability to involve everyone
- your willingness to experiment
- the degree to which the children can be involved in the planning
- your resourcefulness and flexibility

A balanced program

For effectiveness, your program should provide a balance of the following types of activities:

- creative activities
- physical activities (group games and team games)
- free play

1. Creative activities

Some of the most interesting and rewarding forms of recreation, regardless of the age group, are the creative activities. Use all of the following on the play-ground:

- | | |
|--------|----------------------|
| music | puppetry |
| art | interpretive dancing |
| drama | singing |
| crafts | story telling |

Original thought is native to the average person but, because of lack of opportunity, our creative ability often remains latent. When children are given the opportunity to decide what they want to do and how they are to do it, and given the tools and materials to use, their creativeness grows.

Use creative activities when the weather is hot and the shade of a tree is more enticing than the ball diamond. Change activities often for the very young. Older children will enjoy longer periods. Quiet games can be interspersed so that the interest of the children will not be lost.

Information about creative activities can be found in the recreation department library, your local public library or in the program manuals supplied by the Ministry of Culture and Recreation.

2. Physical activities

Physical activities have universal appeal, especially if there is little emphasis on intense competition, and if the idea of co-operation is stressed. Games can be used to build self-confidence as well as physical and intellectual skills.

There are many different types of games or sports that can be used to good advantage on the playground.

As well, there are adaptations of most games that can be used when space is limited or regular equipment is too expensive.

To establish a new sport or creative activity, hold exhibitions and demonstrations by skilled performers and then arrange instructional periods. This will provide an extra bit of interest and excitement, as well as involve other community members in your program.

You can get many new ideas for games and activities from books in your recreation office, local library, or from the activity manuals prepared by the Ministry of Culture and Recreation.

3. Free play

Children have vivid imaginations and should not be confined with routine programs. There should be periods when they can do whatever they choose. They will cultivate their own self-expression and develop their own ingenuity through such things as sand-box play, space trips and climbing equipment.

This type of free play usually begins and ends each morning and afternoon period while the children are gathering or leaving. Some children will prefer to play freely rather than take part in the activity you have organized, and should be allowed to do so, unless it interferes with others.

In order to encourage free play, each playground should have available a variety of materials that children can use when and how they want to:

- dress up clothes
- large blocks and movable lumber
- pots, pans, ladles and spoons
- paints and paper
- whatever you can think of

Organizing the Program

1. The daily pattern

There are always exceptions - depending upon such things as the age-group, the weather, special events and temperature - but each day will tend to follow a routine.

First, check the playground for safety, arrange the bulletin board and organize details for your volunteers

Schedule informal activities or free play to allow the children to collect on the playground

Check attendance at the period of highest interest - some time about mid-morning

Organize the more active team games and sports in the morning while the day is cool

From 11:30 a.m. through noon hour, schedule informal activities or free play so that the children will not disrupt your activities by going home for lunch at various times

After lunch, schedule quiet informal activities first. This allows children to reassemble on the playground and minimizes stomach upsets due to strenuous activities right after meals

Schedule your quiet and creative activities in the afternoon - art and crafts, story-telling, music, puppetry, or drama - during the hottest part of the day.

After four o'clock step up the tempo of your activities, but keep them informal as the children will be leaving for home.

2. The weekly unit

The usual program unit is the week: often activities are based on a theme. Within this unit you will blend together your crafts, games and sports to feature the chosen theme. As an example, suppose an Indian theme is chosen. Then the crafts sessions might be concentrated on building a tepee. Stories would include legends. Games would be those taken from Indian lore. Work the week to a climax on Friday with some type of special event.

3. The seasonal plan

Here you have a bird's-eye view of what will be accomplished during the whole period. The seasonal plan will indicate the sequence of themes you will use, trips away, special contests, special tournaments, days and events you must organize. It will provide you with your day-by-day and week-by-week deadlines for making preparations.

Special Events

Special events are an essential part of the playground program. They are planned from time to time to supplement the regular routine activities. They need not be elaborate or extensive. Sometimes they can be any novel or new activity or game in which the children participate. Short-term special events simply come as a surprise and act as a break from the scheduled program. The more elaborate ones are usually held once a week to attract the parents, or add zip to the whole program. When they are carefully child-centred, they will create enthusiasm, add variety, increase participation, change the pace, or provide a climax at times when interest is apt to wane.

There are three types of special events:

- A short-term event takes place within a half-day or less. It takes the form of a tournament, a treasure-hunt, a pet-show, or something similar
- A day-long event can be used to bring the week's activities to an interesting climax. Track-meets, craft shows, trips to points of interest or hikes usually fill up a whole day. When the program is planned to take place on the playground, the parents and other adults may be invited and perhaps involved in the activities. This kind of special event is frequently arranged for the last day of the season.

- Week-long special events provide sustained interest and give continuity to the program. Such themes as Indian Week, Wild West Week, and Safety Week may be planned.

Check points in planning an elaborate special event

- Plan far enough ahead to accommodate all concerned
- Secure authorization from your recreation authority and clear with everyone – including the parents
- Publicize the event widely, using all possible media
- Assign duties to your volunteers and junior leaders well in advance
- Take the necessary precautions to assure group control if moving off your playground, using the buddy system and crossing-guards
- Arrange for financing all prizes, refreshments or supplies required
- Transportation should be arranged and scheduled well in advance
- When it is over, evaluate the event to assist in future planning

Sometimes special events are carried out on a municipality-wide basis. When several playgrounds come together to one location there must be a great deal of advance planning and co-operation.

Program aids

The Bulletin Board

You can co-ordinate your activities and publicize your program by using a bulletin board. If protected from the weather, it can become your silent leader on the playground. Make it a centre of interest.

- Keep it up to date and attractive
- Use neat lettering
- Organize the material into definite areas on the board
- Add something new every day
- List special events coming up
- Give the standings of the playground teams
- Display craft articles of unusual interest and workmanship

The bulletin board can be used to answer many of the questions you are asked. It can also be used to emphasize points you have made about

- safety rules
- daily and weekly schedules
- playground rules
- coming special events

General Reference Material

There is no shortage of reference material to assist you in planning your program. There are books, magazines, training manuals, program manuals and pamphlets. Enlist the aid of your recreation director or your hiring authority if you have any trouble locating the information you need.

Magazines and Pictures

Use pictures cut from magazines and papers in your craft periods, to represent make-believe objects in imaginative play or to illustrate your bulletin board. The children will likely be glad to bring you a good supply.

Visual Aids

Maps, travel posters, slides, scale models and filmstrips – all can be used to round out your special themes such as travel, Indian life, pioneer life, history, fairy tales, nature lore, and so on.

Odds and Ends

A host of materials can be supplied by the children and used as craft supplies:

twine, cord and yarn, oilcloth and old window-shades, bottles, mirrors, old purses, hats and gloves, shells, feathers, corn husks, corn cobs, coffee tins, tinfoil, clothespins, cigar boxes, pictures, spools, cereal boxes and cartons, corks, toothbrushes.

There may be a manufacturing plant in your community that can provide waste materials free of charge:

scraps of wood, metal, leather, plastic or paper.

Occasionally trade your surplus materials with a leader in another area in order to broaden your selection.

Problem solving and evaluation

Problem-solving

While good planning and organization will greatly reduce the problems you will encounter, there will still be times when things will not go right. Rather than look at problems as things to avoid, or as something to panic at, they should be viewed as opportunities to learn new things and to try new approaches. It is through facing and dealing directly with problem situations that we are able to improve existing situations and to progress.

Usually, just approaching the situation coolly and with common sense will be enough to correct it. There are seven steps to go through:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Identify the problem | Be able to state it in clear, concise terms. Make sure it is a problem and not a symptom of something else. |
| 2. Gather data | Seek out information from others, and from your own memory. Try to understand the problem better. Restate the problem, if appropriate. |
| 3. Alternatives | Think of as many alternative solutions as possible. |
| 4. Prioritize | Prioritize all of your alternatives in ascending to descending order. Consider pros and cons, likelihood of success. |
| 5. Implement | Put your #1 priority solution into effect. |
| 6. Evaluate | Did it work? Why or why not? |
| 7. Repeat | If necessary, implement the #2 priority solution and evaluate those results. |

Using this process works, if you have time to go through it completely. Unfortunately, in most situations, we have little time to spend on steps such as these. Usually we jump right to a solution and hope it works. Often it doesn't.

By using the problem-solving process just outlined on those problems that are not urgent, we train ourselves to respond to problem situations in a logical manner. Then, when we don't have time to formally go through the entire process, our mind filters through all of these steps and comes up with, hopefully, a reasonably sound solution.

When confronted with a problem, it is important to be aware of our abilities and our limits. Many problems are just beyond our ability to solve, calling for very specialized or more informed approaches. We should also be aware of the limits imposed by the hiring authorities. For instance, a child may create certain problems on the playground. You may wish to work those problems through with the child, and feel capable of doing so. However, your employer may have a rigid policy requiring the removal of the child from the program. Just as the hiring authority may provide limits, they will also provide many resources which may be used.

Above all, don't be afraid to ask for help!

Evaluation

Evaluation is one of the most important tools a leader has. By asking pertinent questions, he or she can determine to what extent the objectives have been met, or are being met. They will also receive useful information on what has caused this to happen and what corrective action might be required, if any. The key is to ask the right questions, of the right people, in the right way. What questions? Obviously, this is dependent upon what you want to know. You may just want to get a reaction to a series of programs, and therefore ask a few questions such as:

Are you enjoying the series?
What do you like best/least about it?

You may be doing a very thorough evaluation and require answers to many more questions of a specific as well as general nature. Each question should extract an important piece of information which will be of assistance to the leader and to future leaders. If the information gathered is to be passed on as a report, it should be written up in a clear, concise form.

Who to ask? Ask anyone who can provide you with the kind of information you need. One person not to overlook is yourself. You have as good an idea as anyone about how well something worked or why it didn't work. Others you might want to ask would be the participants, parents, observers or spectators.

How to ask? There are a number of ways to get the answers to your questions.

- be observant – ask yourself what's happening, how's it going?
- talk to individuals – ask a parent how their child likes the program and follow up with more specific questions
- be aware of attendance figures. While this is not an accurate way to evaluate your program, you can be pretty sure that something is wrong if there is a large drop-off in attendance, or vice versa
- talk informally with groups of participants whenever you get a chance
- call a meeting of children to get answers to your questions
- develop a questionnaire that can be sent home to the parents and returned to you

Evaluation is not something that is done at the end of the program so that someone next year won't get into the same trouble you did this year. It is an ongoing process that starts when the program starts and finishes long after the program finishes. It uses as many different approaches as possible. It is intended to keep you on target and eventually to get you to your objective.

Community relations, publicity and public relations

Community Relations

It is important that the playground be not only an activity centre for the children who attend the program, but a resource for the entire community – adults, teenagers, preschoolers and senior citizens alike. There are many opportunities for total community involvement, if the playleader encourages it.

Special events, such as picnics and penny carnivals, can be planned for the entire community. By involving the community in special programs you are likely going to find greater support when you need volunteers. You will also discover a gold mine of skills and talents in the community that might become a part of your program.

The success of your playground program can be limited if there is little interest on the part of the community in it. The best way to develop interest is to involve people in the planning and operation of the playground program. A public meeting held at the playground just prior to the programs' beginning, could identify a number of local concerns. It could provide several suggestions and recruit some community volunteers to assist during the program. Regular newsletters to all local households could keep area residents informed of what's happening, invite them to take part, or offer suggestions.

The playground is a community facility, and every effort should be made to involve the community in it.



Develop a list of ways in which the community
could be involved in your program.

Publicity

Even the best leaders and the finest equipment will not mean much unless people know about them and use them. Publicity, wisely used, will

- acquaint everyone in the community with the opportunities available
- interpret the program for everyone, and educate all to its value
- build friendly interest and support
- encourage all adults and children to participate

Through publicity you communicate to the public, and in doing so present a public image. It is important that this image be a positive one. Therefore, the publicity material you use must be carefully developed, and the campaign thoroughly planned and well presented.

In order to publicize an event, remember the 5 W's

- Who - who's involved, who's running it, who's it for
- What - what's going to happen, what will it look like
- When - when will it start and finish, registration times
- Where - where will the event take place, precise location
- Why - what's the purpose in taking part.

Publicity Methods

1. Word-of-mouth - a well-planned program may not get the attention it warrants at first, but if the children are enjoying it, soon others will be coming.
2. Personal contacts - go out of your way to be friendly with parents when they call at the playground. Show them that the children under your guidance are receiving the best of care and attention. Chat with people in the neighborhood when you meet them on the street.
3. Involve local groups in your program - ask the members of a tennis club to teach tennis, a band to play for a parade.
4. Use parades - especially on opening day. Keep the children orderly and sing as you march. Be conscious of safety requirements and be sure to get permission.

5. Use a bulletin-board. List coming events for all who wish to read. Post any information that may interest children or parents (for example, the health reports for the wading pool), remove all notices when they are out of date.
6. Use posters - eye-catchers to announce special events (invite everyone) and such things as safety programs. Have the children make them during the craft period, and carefully choose the locations for placing the best - churches, stores, parks, post-office. Arrange for the placing of the posters well in advance.
7. Flyers may be made and distributed by the children. Send home good mimeographed material using personal invitations (colored by the children) to specific activities and enlisting the parents' help as volunteers.
8. Doorknob tags may be made by the children and placed on every door in the area.
9. In store-window displays, use craft articles, posters or hobby collections, made by the children.
10. If available, use a sound-truck to announce a special event.
11. On radio, work closely with your best contact person at your local station, if you have one, to give spot-announcements and broadcast news of the most interesting activities.
12. For Newspapers, supply newsworthy human-interest stories, ball scores and playground news. Invite photographers and reporters to cover some of the special events. If you are doing the reporting yourself
 - know the deadline for going to press
 - type stories double-space, keep them brief
 - place the name of your playground and date of release at the top of your first page
 - include the names of participants, correctly spelled, some item that adds color and interest, as well as a complete program for the event
 - remember the five W's: Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Pre-program publicity will likely be arranged by the recreation office or the recreation authority that hired you.

Pre-program publicity should include:

Notices distributed through the public schools and other groups giving

- name and phone number of person in charge of program
- names and locations of all playgrounds
- opening day
- hours of supervision
- age restrictions
- names and experience of leaders
- program features

Announcements and interpretative literature to churches, Sunday schools, Home and School associations and service clubs

Poster competitions

Newspaper advertisements

Talks to clubs and groups using colored slides or movies of previous playground programs

Public Relations

Public relations can be defined as the reaction you create because of your actions.

Good public relations come from anything that builds the prestige of your playground or secures the support of the community for your program. It involves nine-tenths doing and one-tenth talking. It depends to a large extent upon your enthusiasm and sincerity. Your recreation office or the authority that hires you begins the process. You simply continue it.

For you, as a playground leader, it is important to be completely familiar with the prescribed policies of your recreation authority.

Who is your immediate superior?

How do you reach him or her?

What are the channels of authority if you wish to go higher or lower?

To whom do you submit your reports?

Do you deal directly with such people as school caretakers, media?

If you do not know the answers to these questions, and dozens more like them, then ask until you do. You are much less apt to make mistakes if you know exactly how to handle any situation before it develops. Never criticize your recreation department or your hiring authority in public. If you have a complaint, discuss it with your superior.

Areas in which to concentrate your PR

The school maintenance staff

When school closes in June, the caretaker takes full charge of the property. The caretaker is usually in control of the building and can be a tremendous help or hindrance to your program.

- have you a clear understanding as to the space to be used for indoor activities?
- who cleans up after such activities?
- has storage space been allocated for your equipment?
- have room keys been arranged?
- are you to use the caretaker's supplies or must you provide your own?

It might be wise to seek the caretaker's advice about the care of the building and grounds. Above all, don't become involved in arguments. Discuss the matter with your superior and let the superior straighten it out. For a harmonious summer you must get along with the caretaker if you are using school property.

School authorities or park boards

In your municipality you may have no occasion to deal directly with school or park authorities. But no matter who is charged with that responsibility, you can make the task easier by being on your toes.

- report breakages promptly
- before your program begins, check facilities carefully with someone who has some authority. Note broken windows, smudged walls, clogged drains and the like. Such a check can eliminate misunderstanding at a later date
- cut to a minimum those activities that endanger property
- forbid the children to climb fences, run through hedges and shrubs, or climb trees

You are using public property. There is no quicker way to lose the goodwill of the authority concerned than to allow the defacement of the property.

Parents

Who puts the final stamp of approval on participation in the playground program? The parents of the children for whom the playground is operated. Here, then, is an area where public relations are particularly important.

The better acquainted you are with the parents in your area, and they with you, the easier will be your task. You will have fewer visits from irate parents short on reason, and more help from volunteers long on understanding.

By example you can do much to sell your program. Whether you are aware of it or not, the child's opinion about your personality, your attitude to your work and your habits will be carried home.

The immediate neighborhood

Be courteous in all dealings with playground neighbors. Remember, your immediate neighbors will know more of your program, or lack of it than any other voters and taxpayers in the community. Laxness or indifference on your part towards rules and regulations is bound to bring an unfavorable reaction.

Noise can't be avoided with children at play, but it can be regulated to some extent. In the immediate area there may be night-shift workers trying to sleep, or cases of sickness, or other special circumstances to consider.

- teach the children respect for private property as they approach or leave the playground
- send only the most reliable children to retrieve balls that fly over the fence
- do not allow children to torment a neighbor who is a chronic complainer
- lay out play areas to prevent damage to neighborhood gardens

It will be very worth your while to meet and personally chat with your neighbors.

The local constabulary

Here is an excellent opportunity, if you have assistance from your superior, to bring a member of the police force to the playground on a friendly mission. It will help the representatives of the law to acquire the status and the position they should have in the eyes of children.

Ask the constable to take some part in the program and help with

- safety patrol training
- judging safety posters
- bicycle riding instructions
- bicycle rodeo judging

Seek closer co-operation with the police force by

- acquainting them with the opening and closing hours of the playground
- explaining the aims of the program
- listing for them the rules of the playground
- requesting assistance for special events

Parents and VIP's

Your PR will be greatly helped if parents and well-known people take part in the program.

- Invite them to opening and closing program
- Ask them to judge competitions
- Enlist their help for special events
- Let them act as coaches for sports

Even critics can be changed to enthusiastic supporters if they are involved in what is being done.

Express your thank-you's both personally and publicly to all who help.

Safety and the use of equipment

As a playleader, one of your most important concerns is to provide children with a safe place to play. This means preventing accidents!

Safety is a matter of habits and attitudes. Everyone must work at it everyday.

Safety clubs, bicycle rodeos, safety education programs can bring safety right into the playground. Your local police officials, Red Cross Branch, or St. John's Ambulance Corps can help you with such activities.

Inspect all apparatus first thing each day.

See that such things as links and bolt connections are all in perfect condition. Never allow defective apparatus to be used. Report unsafe equipment to the recreation office immediately.

Each day clean up all broken glass, nails or tin cans before beginning the program. Be particularly careful to inspect wading pools. See that children use each piece of apparatus only for the purpose it is intended to serve.

Make those who attend your playground safety-conscious. Encourage the children to report any hazard they see. A safety squad can be formed to

- supervise the crossing of busy streets at opening and closing hours
- make periodic inspections of the grounds and equipment
- enforce safety rules
- help to investigate accidents
- make recommendations for the prevention of accidents

Post general safety rules on the bulletin board – and enforce them .

- do not allow children to throw sand, bats or stones
- forbid the use of air rifles, sling shots and pea shooters
- consider every dangling wire a 'live' electrical hazard
- allow sharp tools to be used only under careful supervision
- use bows and arrows in carefully designated areas and under strict supervision
- have bicycles and tricycles parked in a single designated area as soon as they are brought on the playground
- forbid playing with matches

Most playgrounds are equipped with certain pieces of apparatus (swings, slides, teeter-totters). These were intended to be used in certain ways and are often dangerous if common sense and safety rules are not followed.

Enforce the following special rules for the use of equipment

Swings

- children not swinging should stay a safe distance from the swings
- if a ball rolls under a swing, it should not be picked up until the swing has come to a standstill
- the framework of the swings is not made or intended for climbing
- only one child at a time should use each swing
- the child swinging should be sitting erect, never standing, and should hold on tightly at all times

- wait until the swing has stopped before getting off
- do not run under the swing when pushing
- swing straight ahead, never sideways
- it is dangerous to swing a child by holding the child's feet to push him or her
- coast to a stop, never drag the feet

Teeter-totters

- children not teetering should stay a safe distance away
- always face each other when teetering
- before getting off, warn the person on the other end
- the first child to leave the board should hold it tightly and let it rise gradually, permitting the child on the other end to get off safely
- it is unsafe to stand on a teeter-totter
- learn to teeter without bumping
- keep feet out from under the board

Slides

- slide down feet first, sitting – not standing or lying
- climb up the ladder – not up the slide
- before starting to slide, wait until the last child to use the slide has stepped away from the bottom
- keep the hands away from the sides when coming down the slide

Sand box

- do not throw sand
- do not eat lunches in the sand-box,
or put refuse in it
- keep animals out of sand-box

A Junior Safety Club

Children love to belong to a club, and will sincerely try to carry out its rules and regulations. Enrol members in a playground Safety Club and let the children

- draw up safety rules and regulations
for the playground
- set up safety patrols to check equipment,
see that children form sound safety
habits and practise the rules of the play-
ground
- arrange safety programs through the
police department and fire department

You could even encourage the club members to design a safety award for those who practise good safety habits.

First Aid

A level head and common sense are essentials in first aid. If a serious accident should occur, it is just as important to remember your limitations as it is to know the correct procedures. You can safely look after the band-aid cases, but you must leave major treatment to the medical profession.

No scratch should be considered too small for careful attention.

To be of maximum assistance as a first-aider, you should be

observant - that you may note the causes and signs of
injury

tactful - that you may, without thoughtless questions,
learn the symptoms and history of the case, and
secure the confidence of the patient and the by-
standers

resourceful - that you may use to the best advantage
whatever is at hand to prevent further damage

dextrous - that you may handle a patient without
causing unnecessary pain, and use appliances
efficiently and neatly

explicit - that you may give clear instructions to the
patient or to the bystander

discriminating - that you may decide which of several
injuries should be treated first

persevering - that you may continue your efforts,
though not at first successful

sympathetic - that you may give real comfort and
encouragement to the suffering

So that you are prepared for an emergency -

- have access to a telephone
- know the telephone numbers of a
local doctor, the police and ambulance
service and tape them to the cover of
your first-aid kit
- learn the procedure you are to follow
as laid down by your recreation authority
- check your first-aid kit regularly and have
it readily available

If an accident does happen -

- do not become excited
- clear the area of spectators with the assist-
ance of your volunteers

- have the children return to their normal activities
- summon medical aid
- do not move the patient
- determine the nature of the case insofar as it is necessary to give intelligent treatment
- notify the recreation office, or the person to whom you are responsible
- notify the parents

If there is no other leader to keep the program moving, put your leader-in-training, or a member of your leaders' corps, in charge of the activity.

As soon as the situation is under control, make out your accident report. Be careful to provide all the details, including the names of the children who witnessed the accident.

Visit the child at home as soon after the accident as you can to show your interest and concern. Keep in touch over the course of the program if the child is out for a long time.

Discipline

Discipline, as it applies to you, involves your method of handling

- unpleasant situations created by the children
- misuse of grounds and equipment
- yourself on the job

It is necessary to maintain firm kindness with kind firmness

- to ensure that children play safely
- to prevent older or rougher children from interfering with the play of others
- to ensure equal opportunities for all children
- to prevent wilful damage or undesirable activities

Discipline is so important that its lack can destroy the benefits of your program. Rules and regulations are necessary – but keep them to a minimum.

Rules to Enforce

So that all on the playground may enjoy themselves to the full, it is absolutely necessary for each to respect the rights of others. Rules become essential to assure this respect.

- ground rules – interfering with program or other children
- rules for equipment – breaking or improperly using equipment and materials

- rules for games - participation, team-game equipment
- rules for cleanliness - waste-paper, bottle-tops
- safety rules - craft tools, broken glass
- washroom rules - splashing water, paper towels

You'll need to control some things such as horseplay and yelling, to see that it doesn't get out of hand. You'll need to stop some things, such as defacing of property and smoking, because this type of behavior is not allowable.

Most of these points will be taken care of in the general procedures and policy laid down for you by your recreation authority. The follow-through, however, rests with you. Be sure everyone knows and understands the rules. Begin to enforce them the first day.

Avoiding Discipline Problems

High morale and good discipline are the products of good leadership and a rich program. Give the children a chance to discuss and enforce the rules themselves. Then they are less apt to break them. A feeling of pride and ownership instilled in them will bring with it a feeling of responsibility and concern for the appearance of their playground. It helps if this feeling of ownership can extend beyond the playground to the community. There are many things you can do to help.

- Be prepared for your job

Have a thorough knowledge of every game used. You can't keep on top of the situation if your nose is in the rule-book.

Develop physical skills so that you can demonstrate points and participate occasionally.

Learn children's needs and characteristics as they apply to play.

Nothing inspires confidence in yourself more than a clear understanding of what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. Your problems decrease as your efficiency increases.

- Keep your activities humming

The best way to keep out of discipline problems is to plan an interesting program and carry it out with enthusiasm and sincerity.

- Include something in your program for everyone

Never cater to the whims of a few.

- Earn the children's trust and obedience

Keep your promises. Show no favoritism. Be consistent. Avoid rewards and costly prizes. Ask the children to do only those things you would do yourself.

- Impose rules that can be enforced

For infractions of rules, plan consequences that can be carried out.

- Explain the rules carefully

Be sure you have the full attention of the children and that they understand.

- Give commands that can be obeyed

There is no point in telling four-year olds to sit still. For them it is impossible.

- Use your whistle discreetly to change or stop an activity.

- Learn to correct a child without antagonizing him or her

Avoid nagging and scolding.

- Keep "don'ts" to a minimum by seeking co-operation.

- Consider the child's motives

If they make a mistake trying to help, they're not being naughty.

- Never resort to threats or make a child afraid.

- Never make disobedience so interesting the child will be tempted to try it. Avoid saying things like, "If you do that once more, you'll be sorry!"

- Keep temptation to a minimum

If you know a child really wants something such as a knife, put it away out of sight. If material is not to be used, put it away. If bicycle riding is not allowed, have a parking area for them.

You will notice that most of these suggestions are for the prevention of trouble and are not cures.

Giving reproof

In spite of all you can do to avoid trouble, there will still be a few rebels.

How do you give reproof?

- have complete control of yourself, including the tone of your voice
- be sure of your facts, and choose your words carefully
- be firm but fair – children respect a strict disciplinarian far more than a weak one
- be certain the individual knew and understood the rule involved
- be impartial – "We like you, but we don't like what you are doing."
- align yourself with the group – it is not you whom the child has offended, but the whole group

- be corrective and helpful – never ridicule a child or use sarcasm
- be prompt but not hasty
- give reproofs in private, never before the group
- deny the child the privilege of taking part in the activity, if necessary
- after the punishment, don't harbor a grudge; bring the child back into the group and seek his or her co-operation.

If the trouble-maker persists, then visit the parents. But don't antagonize them. Friendly discussion of the situation will likely win your point and their co-operation. As a leader, you have no authority to expel a child from the playground. The person to whom you are responsible should be brought into the picture long before the situation requires such drastic action.

If you are having much trouble with discipline, then perhaps you should take a fresh look

- at yourself
- at your program
- and then at the children.

It is surprising how often the trouble can be traced either to you or to your program.

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A. Reference Texts *

Planning for Play - Lady Allen of Hurtwood, London, Thames and Hudson, 1960

The Psychology of Play - S. Millar, Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1968.

Your Child from One to Six - Award Books, New York, Universal, 1968

Baby and Child Care, Dr. Benj. Spock, Richmond Hill, Simon and Schuster, revised

Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, Geo. D. Butler, New York, Ronald Press, 1950

* These are only a few of the many reference texts available to you. Check with your local librarian for other listings.

B. Ministry of Culture and Recreation Booklets.

All of these manuals and booklets plus many others are available through the regional offices of the Ministry.

Children's Activities Manuals for Leaders

Art and Crafts

Play to Music

Nature Study

Puppetry

A Path to the Community

Notes for Community Leaders



1979 International
Year of the Child

The right to affection, love and understanding. The right to adequate nutrition and medical care. The right to free education. The right to full opportunity for play and recreation. The right to a name and nationality. The right to special care, if handicapped. The right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster. The right to learn to be a useful member of society and to develop individual abilities. The right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood. The right to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national or social origin.

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child